

ENJOYING A VACATION UNDER FRENCH FLAG IN NORTH AMERICA

Delightful St. Pierre, the Breton Fishing Village, "Forty-five Hours From Broadway," Is a Mine of the Unusual and Picturesque for the Recreation Seeker

If you want to have some fun stroll around into one of the Fifth Avenue tourist agencies and nonchalantly ask for a ticket to French North America. After you have finished explaining that you do not mean any of the French settlements in Canada the young gentleman who attends to you will probably call the manager and you will most likely have the pleasure of informing him in a "didn't you know that" manner that the French flag still flies in North America on the little flyspeck of an isle called St. Pierre.

After the manager recovers from the shock of being a mere tourist tell him anything new has next surprise will come when you tell him that it is barely sixty hours from New York. How I came to select this little known spot for a vacation is a sort of romance in itself. And of course, like a really truly romance, it has a woman at the bottom of it.

Her name is Frances and whenever I'm in doubt about anything I go and ask her opinion. I do not always agree with what she advises, but usually she spurs me into action of some kind. Having resolved to take a two weeks vacation and not knowing where to go I went to Frances to find out.

"Frances," I said, "I am going on a vacation."

"Where," she answered.

"I don't know," I confessed, "that's why I'm here. I've only got two weeks and I don't want to go to Atlantic City, Sharm's Park, Arverne, Long Beach, Atlantic Highlands or—"

"You won't get anywhere in two weeks if you start on a journey of elimination," she broke in. "Never mind where you don't want to go. Where do you want to go?—that's the question."

"I tell you I don't know."

"Then why don't you do what that man at the Jennison's spoke of the other night?"

"What was that?" I asked.

"Oh, I met a man there the other night who said he was on a steamer going from San Francisco to Japan a year or two ago and he met a quaint old German on board and chummed in with him. The old chap was about sixty years of age and traveling alone. One day he asked the old German where he was making for, and to his surprise he replied, 'To the Vale of Cashmir.'"

"The Vale of Cashmir?" echoed my man. "What on earth are you going there for?"

"Well, I'll tell you," said the old German. "Nearly all my life I have lived in Milwaukee, where I am a brewer. I have no family and no relatives. A few years ago I awoke up to the fact that I had been spending my life making money and had not taken time to see much of the world, so I resolved to travel."

"The conventional method of sailing to Europe and living in first class hotels in cities which all resemble each other did not appeal to me very much. So one night I went home and got out an old map of the world mounted on a wall. I commenced spinning it around. I took a long pin in my hand and closed my eyes with the fixed resolve to go to whatever spot on the globe I would pick with the pin."

"You will laugh when I tell you that the first place I pricked was Ypsilanti, Mich., and I went to Ypsilanti for my first vacation. Within that same year I turned my globe and pricked Irkutsk, Siberia, and I journeyed to Irkutsk. This is the third year of my travels and I pricked the Vale of Cashmir, and to the Vale of Cashmir I go. And when I have seen the Vale of Cashmir I'll go back to Milwaukee for another year."

"There, what do you think of that?" said Frances as she concluded.

"Bully little idea," I replied. "Me for the atlas. Got one?"

"Yes, but will you promise to go wherever we prick the atlas? Honor bright?"

"Cross my heart I'll go, even if it means Pittsburgh," I vowed. "But hold of a moment," I added. "If we're going to play this kind of game, please confine yourself to the United States and Canada. My vacation lasts only two weeks. No Vale of Cashmir for me, thank you."

The atlas was brought out and laid on the table. Frances covered her eyes. With the longest hapin she could find she stood all prepared to stab some section of North America. Bing! down came the pin, and at first sight it looked as if I were to spend my vacation in the middle of the Atlantic. However, on closer examination we found that the pin had penetrated a speck of an isle called St. Pierre.

That's how I came to spend my vacation at St. Pierre.

Nobody in New York seemed to know how to get there, but after a good deal of inquiry, map razing, table bashing and telegraphing I took a boat



A church ceremony in the Breton fishing village.

GIGANTIC SPIDER THAT PREYS ON BIRDS



Life-size pictures of an avicular mygale taken in the Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris. This rather terrifying creature is found in certain regions of North Africa and French Guiana and sometimes grows to be a foot across from tip to tip of its limbs. The beaks attain a length of 1 1/4 inches. They are venom carrying and are capable of causing a very dangerous wound. The avicular mygale is a hunting spider. It lives on large insects, mice and small birds. It makes its home in an underground burrow, where it lies in wait for its victims. It is a formidable foe for animals of its size.

and in St. Pierre, where you can obtain practically every form of drink known to mankind, it is not surprising that contact with salt cod should have created a desire to get rid of the salty taste in the cafes. The fishermen all wear tremendously high and tremendous heavy sea boots, which prevent even the most helplessly drunk from falling. You can often see a voyageur who has imbibed too freely with the upper part of his body reeling round and round while his legs remain perfectly stationary.

At one time St. Pierre was the centre of an enormous traffic in smuggling. With free trade between the island and France wines, silks, satins and other luxuries found a ready market there, easily explainable by its proximity to Canadian territory. At one time (many old salts tell you with a wink that it is not all over even today) the Newfoundland Government suffered very severely in its revenues through large cargoes of champagne, gin, whiskey, opium, tobacco and silk reaching its shores in fishing boats arriving mostly at night from St. Pierre.

Even if smuggling is not carried on to any large extent to-day there is still remaining a certain picturesqueness of atmosphere about the regular inhabitants that we have come to associate with jolly old smugglers, and they often seem to wear a knowing smile that seems to say, "We could a tale unfold."

There is a warm spot in the heart of the average Pierrois for fugitives from justice, and a more or less ready welcome is provided for all and sundry who may reach the island seeking sanctuary. A few of the leading citizens are gentlemen who have found it patriotic (and expedient) to leave their respective countries and change their names on the way.

Less than a dozen Americans visit this island in a year and there is no hotel or regular accommodation for tourists with the exception of a house kept by two maiden ladies who usually provide board and shelter for those who make the interesting venture and drop in at St. Pierre. Their home is spotlessly clean and old fashioned. The bedrooms are almost entirely occupied by the hugest beds I have ever seen. You get into bed with a stepladder, and when you've made the plunge into the billowy depths of the feather mattress you find yourself like a petty island of flesh surrounded by a mountainous sea of white.

Good cooking, gentility and a rare flavor of hospitality greet one in this island home and one's bill for all this is a marvel of reasonableness in these piping days of tourist baiting.

The town itself is a drab, uninviting affair. It has no meadows, no trees, no flowers and no vegetation of any kind. There is no gorgeous view or waterfall or awesome mountain to draw one here. The people are the whole show. They provide all the color in the streets. You hear their merry chattering, you

see their tense faces light up, you watch their jerky gestures and you realize how thoroughly alive the French are in every detail of their intercourse with one another. The silver and blue gendarmes look pompously at the non-

uniformed citizens. The young men smile slyly at the village maidens, who giggle in return, as all orthodox village maidens should.

The red caps of the peasants and blue blouses of the fisher folk splash the

whole scene merrily. The click-clack of the sabots on the cobble stones and the drumbeat of the town crier complete your wonder that only a day or two from such scenes Broadway's asphalt sizzles in the July sun.

For those who love the unusual and picturesque and who do not fear the prospect of a trip unaccompanied by do lux comforts I cannot too strongly recommend a vacation in French North America.

New York Policemen Targets for Practical Jokers

TWO policemen stood on the Manhattan bank of the Harlem River one day last week talking "shop."

"Any suicides from High Bridge lately?" one of them asked by way of keeping up conversation.

The other was about to make reply when he glanced up at the bridge. What he saw gave him momentary faith in the fictionally overworked "god of coincidence." Hurting down from the topmost point of the bridge was the coatless, hatless body of a man. Over and over it spun in a descent that to the onlooking policeman seemed interminable. Finally it struck with a mighty splash and disappeared.

The policeman hurried to the spot. They jumped into a rowboat and put out to the rescue. Before they were well started the head of the bridge diver reappeared above the water and he began a violent struggle to keep afloat.

The rescuers realized that no time was to be lost and bent desperately to their task of rowing. It was plain that the unfortunate man could not last long. The boat, indeed, reached him just as he was sinking for the second time. The policeman leaned out of their rocking little craft and at the risk of a ducking managed to pull the half drowned man aboard.

Something which the policeman described as a "merry horse laugh" echoing in concert from half a hundred throats along the parapet above turned the drama into a farce comedy at this juncture. Looking about them for an explanation the policeman discovered a moving picture camera apparatus trained upon them from the deck of a float rocking against the shore, with the enthusiastic operator hard at his task.

The situation dawned upon them with a bang. They had unwittingly played secondary heroes in a new movie thriller. They had contributed realism to a stunt that might have otherwise seemed set and artificial. In short, they had been made the butt of a great joke. Of course the bridge jumper and the camera man were arrested, but they were only too glad to take a little walk to the police station by way of paying for their splendid day's gain, especially

so when they were at length freed by the Magistrate.

The same thing is going on constantly in this big town. Jokesmiths are playing their pranks on policemen and "getting away with it" too. As some one has phrased it, there are 365 April Fool days on every police calendar. The jokes range all the way from "murder" clues which stir the best detectives of the department to strenuous endeavor for days at a time down to the thousand and one crank letters and false telephone tips which filter in to the police stations every twenty-four hours only to be detected before they have caused any trouble.

Most of the plausible jokes have some selfish excuse behind them. For instance, there's a girl living up in Harlem who has run away from home three times during the last sixteen months. The police have conducted a search for her on each occasion at the instance of the parents. Each time the girl has returned home during the feverish search with a thrilling tale of having been kidnapped.

The truth is that she has tired of her lark every time she has essayed it and has concocted her adventure story to excuse her dereliction and offset the possible effects of parental fire. Running away has become a habit with her. But the police have to send out an alarm for the girl every time they are asked to. That's one of the drawbacks of having 5,000,000-odd bosses as every New York policeman has.

Closely akin to this species of fake is the stock robbery yarn of the not too prosperous husband who loses his weekly wages—or allowance, if he is of the henpecked tribe—in a poker game. This antediluvian joke is generally recognized by the desk lieutenant the minute it is brought in. Some pretence of official duty has to be kept up, however, and so the "victim's" name is always taken and a detective assigned to investigate.

Usually interrogation of the "victim" will disclose the weak point in his story and the detectives will be saved the trouble of any extended work. Of course, this joke is dressed up in a new garb to fit the ideal of an unusual imagination every once in a while, but in the rough it journeys merrily along from year to year.

One of the most famous cases in the police record of "unfounded reports"—for that is the way the various jokes are recorded—is known as the "hand and foot fake." On the night of March 31,

1911, some small boys at play found a wrapped up cigar box on the sidewalk in 125th street near Lexington avenue. Thinking that some shopper had grown careless with his purchase and accidentally dropped it, the urchins grabbed the box up and started for a more secluded spot with a view to satisfying their suspicions by detailed inspection of the contents.

They had not gone more than half a block before one of them opened the box and a dismembered human hand and foot bounced out on the cement. Inevitably the incident drew its crowd. Coroner Holtzhauser and a half dozen detectives were summoned posthaste, and quickly the newspaper reporters were on the scene gathering the details of another "great murder mystery."

Under the overturned box the first detectives on the scene found the torn scraps of what seemed to have been a letter written in German. That added another element of mystery to the case. The detectives spent hours searching the sidewalk and the street for fragments of the letter which had been scattered by the wind. The next day—April Fool's day—the search was extended to take in other possible clues. The excitement lasted for three or four days. Then one fine morning a chemist took the hand and foot to his laboratory, subjected them to a chemical test and found their veins to be full of preservative fluids such as are used in medical colleges to keep the exhibits in a fit state for study. Some college student with an eye to "April Fool" fun undoubtedly knows the unrevealed details of the "hand and foot fake."

After that murder clues began to develop all over town, but the police were not so quick to forget their lesson as some of the jokesmiths seemed to imagine. The various finds were subjected to the regulation tests as fast as they were brought in and in time the prank players tired of their assiduous and the incident took its place in the annals of forgotten fun.

One version of this class of joke on the police is to be found in the case of the counterfeit suicide who leaves his clothing and a farewell note to some mythical relative on a river pier or the shore of the bay. Many of these fakes are arranged with a view to covering the disappearance from the city of some criminal or suspect sought by the police. Just why the joker should want to leave his clothing behind the police cannot understand.

Real river suicides usually take their fatal leaps full garbed.

Hardly a week goes by without some of the East Side police stations receiving a fake suicide call with a man in the role of the victim. The accepted custom in affairs of this kind is for the despondent one—usually a youth given to herculean imaginations—to drink a swallow of water treated with a carbolic solution, throw himself at the feet of his beloved and begin his writhing, pain racked farewell declamation. So frequent are occurrences of this kind that East Side policemen have developed the faculty of telling the false from the true with the first whiff from the telltale bottle.

If they decide that the suicide is a fake they lose no time in calling the ambulance surgeon. This matter of fact official proceeds upon his arrival to subject the "dying one" to the stomach pump, a few jerks of which usually cause all "serious" symptoms to disappear.

From the same part of town the police get many suicide reports, only to learn that some indigent toothache sufferer had adopted that means of having the ambulance surgeon called to treat his throbbing molar.

Various ruses are adopted by mothers in the poorer sections of the town to get the police to care for their babies while they are off shopping. One scheme frequently tried successfully is put into execution by leading the child up to some guileless looking bystander and announcing that "the little lad seems to be lost." If his heart be of the right size and texture the guileless looking one is sure to volunteer to take the "lost child" to the police station.

There the youngster is taken in charge by the reserves, coddled and petted and fed with candy and fruits and told wonderful things, against the hourly expected alarm from the agitated parents. The mother usually takes her own good time at shopping, but always times her stopovers so as to get to the police station on a "breathless search" for her "lost child" before 9 o'clock—the hour for turning the strayed waifs over to the Children's Society. Jokes of this kind always have a sting, because the victims are never thanked for their concern and activities. The perpetrators are too busy keeping up appearances.

Truly the ability "to see a joke" (in time) is a great qualification toward efficient service as a policeman—at least in New York City.



The women engage in cleaning codfish.



French marines parading in St. Pierre.